

Rare Animals of Louisiana



Crested Caracara

Caracara cheriway

Rarity Rank: S1/G5

	1	2	3	4	5
State					
Global					
	imperiled		rare		secure

Identification:

- Medium sized raptor with total length ranging from 49 to 58 cm
- Black crest and bare, orange face
- Black lower back and belly, white neck, patterned upper breast and back, long yellow legs
- In flight, white patches on tips of wings with white head and tail with a black tip
- Immature birds lack the white neck, but have a continuation of the brown pattern of the upper breast and back of mature birds



Photo by Dan Lane

Taxonomic comments:

Formerly included in *C. plancus*, but recognized as a separate species on the basis of analyses of plumage, morphology, and reported hybridization. *C. planus*, now referred to as the Southern Caracara, is restricted to southern Peru and central Brazil south to Tierra del Fuego and the Falkland Islands.

Habitat:

This species occurs in open areas such as prairies or rangeland with scattered trees

Food habits:

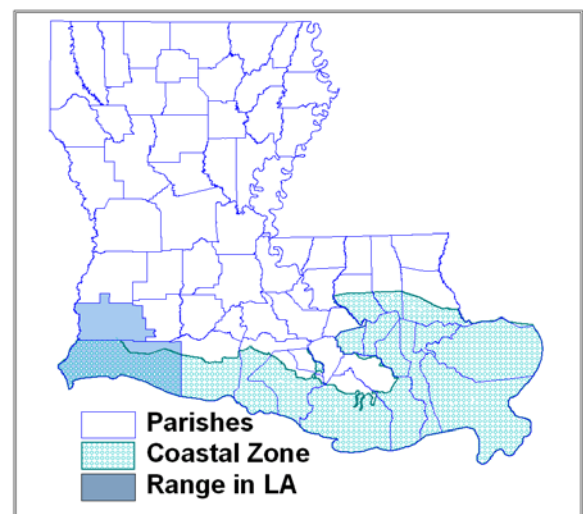
Carrion, insects, fish, reptiles, amphibians, birds and eggs

Range:

- Mainly southeast Texas, also Florida
- Louisiana population is restricted to the extreme southwest portion of the state, particularly Cameron Parish
- Range extends into South America

Reproduction:

- Pairs mate for life and live together throughout the year
- Both sexes build nest between January and March after which 2 to 3 large brown eggs with brown blotches are laid
- Both parents incubate the eggs for one month, and young fledge about 2 months after hatching



Range based on occurrences in Natural Heritage database

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Threats:

- Unwarranted negative attitudes towards these birds result in shooting and poisoning in parts of its range
- Collisions with vehicular traffic when scavenging along roadsides, particularly for first-year juveniles
- Loss of habitat due to urban and agricultural development

Beneficial Management Practices:

Raise awareness of and educate the general public about where species occurs

LA River Basins:

Mermentau, Calcasieu, Sabine

References:

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